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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by Mr Mohamad Maidin Packer Mohd, 22 Jan 2000, 3 pm

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY MR MOHAMAD MAIDIN BIN PACKER MOHD,
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND ADVISER
TO MESRA AT THE MESRA HARI RAYA AIDILFITRI RECEPTION
2000 ON SATURDAY, 22 JANUARY 2000 AT 3.00 PM AT MANDARIN
SINGAPORE BALLROOM**

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Good Afternoon

The President and Mrs S R Nathan

Mr Abdullah Tarmugi
Minister for Community Development
and Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs

Mr Sidek Saniff
Senior Minister of State for the Environment

Fellow Parliamentary Colleagues

MESRA Council Members

Ladies and Gentlemen

We are very honoured to have the President and Mrs S R Nathan with us this afternoon. On behalf of the People's Association Malay Activity Co-ordinating Council (MESRA), I would like to extend my warmest greetings to the President and Mrs S R Nathan for joining us in celebrating the first Hari Raya Aidilfitri of the 21st century.

2 MESRA was formed in May 1988 as the apex body of the Malay Activity Executive Committees (MAECs) at the community centres/clubs. Since then, MESRA has been playing a very important part in the unending process of fostering national unity and social cohesion.

3 MESRA is effective in encouraging Malay interest groups to operate in the multi-racial community centres/clubs as MAECs or their sub-groups. As at 31 December 1999, there were 81 MAECs with 1,200 Committee Members. They were complemented by another 7,500 members in 270 sub-groups. The increase in sub-group membership over the past three years was 67%. The sub-groups have done very well in promoting Malay cultural, sports and other activities at the grassroots levels. These activities, including Malay dance, drama and music; angklung; kompong and hadrah; dikir barat; sepak takraw and silat, have enriched the lives of Singaporeans.

4 With the support of the MAECs and their sub-groups, MESRA has jointly organised many successful national projects with other Malay organisations such as Majlis Pusat, PERSISI, Singapore Amateur Sepak Takraw Association, Taman Baccan and Singapore Hadrah and Kompong Association over the years.

5 1999, however, was the most exciting year for MESRA. It organised two National Education Seminars to enhance the awareness of the Malay community leaders on national issues and current affairs; four Road Shows to prepare the Malay community for the "Knowledge-Based Economy"(KBE) Convention; a fund-raising concert in aid of the KBE Convention; and two management courses to equip younger Malay community leaders with better skills to plan and implement quality activities for the benefit of the Malay

community and other Singaporeans.

6 At the national level, MESRA can do more and better, especially in the area of promoting racial harmony. With its vast organisational resources and extensive contacts at the ground, I am confident that MESRA will be able to initiate and participate in more joint projects with non-Malay/Muslim organisations.

7 At the grassroots level, I urge the MAECs to learn from one another's success stories. However, we have to adapt the ideas for local conditions and evolve our programmes accordingly because the equation for success for one neighbourhood may not hold true for another.

8 Finally, may I wish all of you "A Happy and Prosperous New Year and Hari Raya Aidilfitri".

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